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JOHN HALLE

ANATOMISTE, CHIRURGIEN, MODERNIST

1530 — 1600

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BOSTON

PRESS OF
JAMAICA  PRINTING
COMPANY
BOSTON, MASS.

REPRINTED FROM
THE BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL
APRIL TWENTY-TWO
1915

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ANATOMISTE, CHIRURGIEN, MODERNIST.*

1530—1600.

BY CECIL K. DRINKER, M.D.. BOSTON.

It is an easy task to select the great medical figures of the 16th century and to follow them with fair success through their eventful careers of scientific exploration. These giants have their due today and their lives, as expressed by imaginative achievement, are fairly opened to us. But even so, we are woefully lacking in intimate knowledge of the way they worked, and especially of the conditions which surrounded their early training. If this is true of the great, it is obvious that even more difficulty must attend attempts to get at the true status of medical practice at such a time. The ordinary doctors in an extraordinary period; what general practice meant in these dark days; how the country physician fought through his prosaic rounds—these have been my interest, and I shall illustrate them by passages from the life of John Halle, an Elizabethan country doctor practising in Kent in the little village of Maidstone.

This man slightly antedates Harvey, living from 1530-1600. He has left us the first work upon anatomy published in England in the English tongue. Vicary's Anatomy appeared in 1577, fifteen years after his death, and while

* Read before the Historical Club of the Harvard Medical Society, January 5, 1915.

there is a tradition that the first edition came out in 1548, no one even knows upon what basis such an idea has risen. Halle's Anatomy is not in the least valuable nor creditable from the point of view of original observation. It appeared in 1565 and is appended to his translation of the *Chirurgia Parva* of Lanfranc. He called it "A compendious worke of Anatomie more utile and profitable, than any heretofore in the Englyshe tongue published." The "worke" is indeed "compendious" as regards the anatomy, there being but ninety-six pages for the whole subject. We may say that the "Anatomie" is of the 14th Century, the work of William of Salicet, Lanfranc and Guy de Chauliac redressed to suit his English readers, and disappointingly barren. But in defence of Halle we may contend with safety that it is quite as good as Vicary's *Profitable Treatise of the Anatomie of Man's Body*. Halle, however, was a provincial surgeon, while Vicary was one of the best known surgeons of his day, being First Master of the Barber Surgeons and attached to the courts of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth.

Fortunately for us, medical authors were not overwhelmed by material in those good days nor trammelled by conventionalities of method, so that our anatomist and surgeon feels at liberty to favor us with his general views upon practice, his ideas upon methods of study, and last and evidently most vital to him, with a fierce arraignment of the quacks who seem to have tormented him incessantly in his quiet country village.

There is not a dull moment in this old book, nor one in which the reader does not feel himself the intimate friend of this most worthy, gra-



R. M.

Corporis effigies quam vides graphice pictam
 Hauli est, sic pictor fingere tibi velit:
 At modo si quæris vultum dignoscere verum,
 Hos lege, hij vere explicuere animum.

cious and sometimes pugnacious author. The dedication, "Unto the Worshipful, the Maisters, Wardens and consequently to all the whole company and brotherhood of Chirurgiens of London, John Halle, one of the lest of them, sendeth hartie and lovyng salutation," is followed by an epistle which indicates the chief reason for his work, namely, to spread knowledge which shall put a stop to the activities of false practitioners whose incessant mistakes and mercenary minds are dragging medicine into disrepute.

"And alas," he says, "whereas there is one in 'Englande,' almoste throughout all the realme, that is indede a true minister of this arte, there are tenne abominable abusers of the same. Whereas there is one Chirurgien, that was an apprentice, to his arte, or one phisicien that hath travayled in the true studie, and exercise of physique; There are tenne, that are presumptuous smearers, smaterers, or abusers of the same: Yea, Smythes, Cutlers, Carters, Coblars, Copars, Coriars of lether, Carpenters, and a great rable of women: Which (as the moste excellent Galen feared to happen) forsake their handiecraftes, and for filthy lucre abuse phisick and chirurgerie.*

"Would to God therefore, my dere maisters and brethren, that there might be no fault found in us concerning these things. For truly if we weare such men of science, as we ought to be, those false abusers would be more fearful to meddle as they doe. For what a shame were it, that such an abuser in talkinge with a chirurgien in ded, shall apere more perfect in the knowl-

* Compare William Clowes (1540—1604) who complains of medical practice by "tinkers, tooth-drawers, peddlers, ostlers, carters, porters, horse-gelders and horse-leeches, idiots, applesquires, broom-men, bawds, witches, conjurers, soothsayers, and sow-gelders, rogues, rat-catchers, runagates, and proctors of spitte-houses."

A most excellent and

LEARNED VVOORKE OF CHI-

urgerie, called Chirurgia parua Lanfranci,

Lanfranke of Mylayne his bricfe: reduced from dyuers
translations to our vulgar or vsuall frase,

and now first published in the En-

glyshe prynte by Iohn Halle

Chirurgien.

Who hath therunto neces-

sarily annexed.

A Table, as wel of the names of diseases and simples

with their vertues, as also of all other termes of the

arte opened. Very profitable for the better vn-

derstanding of the same, or other

like woorkes.

And in the ende a compendious woрке of Anatomie, moze

vtile and profitable, then any here tofoze in the

Englyshe tongue publyshed.

AN HISTORIALLE EXPOSTVLATION

also against the beastly abusers, both of Chyr-

urgerie and Physicke in our tyme: With a

goodly doctrine, and instruction, ne-

cessary to be marked and

folowed of all true

Chirurgiens.

All these faithfully gathered, and diligently set

fozth, by the sayde Iohn Halle.

Imprinted at London in Flete streete, nyghe

unto saint Dunstones church,

by Thomas Marshe.

AN. 1565.

edge of the anatomie, and the natures of simples, or the complexion of man his bodie, then he that hath been apprenticed to his arte? Surely me thinketh this were a great occasion, not only to cause these abusers more to presume: but I fear me also that suche thinges have bene the cause, that suche abusers have bene defended, of those which of right shoulde have subdued them." After a brief note upon the merit of Lanfranc's work and mention of the addition of his own brief anatomy, the worth of which he leaves his brethren to judge, he ends with a tremendous blast against all abusers of medicine.

Following this dedication are letters from two of Halle's surgical friends, William Cunningham and Thomas Gale,* commending his work and his good spirit. These notices are in the same vein of frank extravagance which we see today in the book reviews of many medical journals. One of them, Gale, mentions a curious point of view, but one which in his day was perhaps more practical. John Halle seems to have told his friends of his intention to publish his work in English and of his desire to spread information in this way. Whereupon it was held that in making scientific matters so plain to everyone he would open medical practice to even greater abuse. Halle later refers to the same objection, saying: "I am not ignorant, that some men will thinke, that this booke (beyng publyshed) wyll be an occasion for such men to be the bolder to abuse the same science. But I know and am sure, that they shall not learne in this booke anythyng wherewith to hurte; neither have I publyshed the same for them. And farther if any abuser of chirurgery reade this boke,

* Thomas Gale (1507-1586?) a surgeon and author of *An Excellent Treatise of Wounds Made by Gonneshot* (London, 1563).

he shall (I trust) so fynd himself rubbed on the galle, that he shall be moved (if he have any shame) to leave his vice, rather than more to use it."

And now John Halle, having fulfilled all the formalities and attended to his advertising, turns his attention to his "lovyng Readers," to whom he gives "greeting in our eternal Lorde, the author of all knowledge," and sets forth more explicitly the scope of his work. In this, which is the real preface, we are told of the parts of medicine, "Physiologia, Pathologia, and Therapeutica," and how "these III are together (as most necessary partes of one body), so joyntly united, that neither the last can anything profit withoute the first and seconde, nor the first be perfect and utile withoute the seconde, and thyrde, etc. So doubtlesse can the professor of neither part lack any portion of them, without so great imperfection as is his lacke." Therapeutics in its turn divides itself into "Dietetice, Pharmaceutice, and Cheirurgice." As time passes these three parts of what should be one profession are becoming three professions and this against the express advice of the ancient authorities. "But," we are told, "let the present tyme be judge therein, howe much hurte the same causeth. For the persones professing either of these partes are so in hate with the other partes, that they thynke it a dishonor to be acquainted one with another. . . the physiciens or professors of the dietetike parte, abhorre chirurgie, as a thyng to vyle for their profession. And they that are chirurgiens, estemyng their profession to bee only one part of physicke, and that for the exterior partes of manne's bodie, regarde not to be learned thynkyng that it is not nedeful to their arte. And

likewyse the pharmaceutike parte, trustyng to the learnyng of the physicians and chirurgiens, thynke it no boote to be learned themselves. In so much that olde women must gather their herbes, unto whom they trust for the truth of thynges, rather than to their owne knowledge. And the physiciens havynge only learning, truste to the chirurgiens and apothecaries for experience; and yet in the meane season hatynge either or both, if they medle in the dietetike parte; so that betwene trusting and hatynge one an other, they are all void and destitute of perfection."

Halle is a surgeon and it is with those who attempt surgery that he is most concerned. The properties and conditions of a surgeon are defined very carefully. "A chirurgien," we are told, "should have three dyvers properties in his person. That is to saie, a harte as the harte of a lyon, his eyes like the eyes of an hawke, and his handes as the handes of a woman.

"Seyng also, that those auncient authors had not only this regarde to the forme of the body, but also and as well to the bewtie or ornament of the mynde, and honest conversation of hym that should be admitted to chirurgery, as are these; He ought to be well mannered, of good audacitie and bolde where he may worke surely, and contrarywyse doubtfull and fearfull, in things that be dangerous and desperate. He must be gentyll to his pacients, witty in prognosticos, apte and resonable to answer and dissolve all doubtes and questions belongyng to his worke. He must also be chaste, sober, meke, and merciful, no extorcioner, but so to accomplishe his rewarde at the handes of the ryche, to mayntaine his science and necessary lyvynges, that he may help the poor for the only sake of God."

Next the young student begins to get direct advice. He is warned against an apprenticeship with a man who wishes a drudge and will keep him for seven years, not daring to teach anything lest his own ignorance become apparent. Gaming and other typical pleasures of medical students, must be avoided, forsaken for knowledge, his one pursuit. "Let thy boke, therefore, I saye, be thy pastyme and game: which (if thou love it as thou oughtest) will so delight thee, that thou shalt thinke no tyme so well bestowed as at it. Yea thou muste desyre it as the childe doeth his mother's pappe; and so will it nourishe thee, that thou shalt worthily growe and increace to a worshypfull fame of cunnyng and learnyng."

And now we come upon the translation of Lanfranc which, however, does not illustrate conditions of practice as well as the last division of the book entitled "An Historiall Expostulation also against the beastly abusers, both of Chyrurgerie and Phisicke in our tyme: with a goodly doctrine, and instruction necessary to be marked and folowed by all true Chirurgiens."

In the "Expostulation" we are fortunate in having an account of some of the quacks who came into Halle's village.

"In the year of our Lord a thousand fyve hundred fyftie and eyght, there came to Maydstone one Thomas Lufkyn, by occupation a Fuller, a bucler of clothe, and had bene brought up (by report of divers honest men) at the fullynge mylles there besyde the towne, nevertheles he had been long absent from that countrie, in which tyme he had by roving abroad become a Physicien, a Chirurgien, an Astronomer, a Palmister, a Physiognomier, a Sothsayer, a Fortunte Devyner, and I cannot tell what. This deceaver

was the beastliest beguiler by his sorcerys that ever I herd of, making Physike the onely colour, to cover all his crafty thefte, and mischieve, for he set oppe a byll at his fyrste commynge, to publishe his beyng there, the tenour whereof was in effect as followeth:—

“ ‘If anye manne, womane or childe, bee sycke, or would be let bloud, or bee diseased with anye maner of inward or outward grefes, as all maner of agues, or fevers, pleurisies, cholyke, stone, strangulion, impostumes, fistulas, kanker, goutes, pockes, boneache, and payne of the joynts, which cometh for lacke of bloud lettyng: let them resorte to the synge of the Saracen’s hedde, in the easte lane and brynge their waters with them to be sene and they shall have remedie.

.....By me Thomas Luffkin.’.....

“Unto this Divell incarnate resorted all sortes of vayne and indiscrete persons, as it were to a God, to know all secretes paste and to come, specially women, to know how many husbandes and children they shoulde have, and whethere they should burie their husbands then lyving. And to be brefe, there was not so great a secrete, that he would not take upon to declare; unto some he prophecied death within a month who thanks be to God are yet lyving and in healthe. All this he bosted he could do by Astronomie. But when he was talked with of one that had but a yonge and smalle skylle in that arte, he could make no directe answeere no more than puppe my dogge.

“Amonge manye that talked with him, one of mine acquaintaunce asked him this question: Sir, quod he, if you be so cunnygne as ye are named or as you would fayne be esteemed to be, Wherefore goe ye, and travaile ye, from place to place: For beinge so cunning, ye cannot lacke

wheresoeuer ye dwell: for people will resort unto you farre and nere: so that you should not neede thus to travaile for your livynge. Unto whom he made thys beastlye answer: I know, quod he, by Astronome the influence of the starres and thereby perceave, when and howe long any place shall be unto me fortunate; and when I perceave by the starres, that any evell fortune, is like to chance to me in that place: I streighte waye wiselye avoid the danger, and goo to another place where I knowe it will be fortunate and luckye."

After a career which seems to have been immensely annoying to Halle, this "beastlye deceaver" begins to be understood by the people and takes himself off with all the money he can lay his hands upon. He is interesting to us because of his use of a bill of advertisement and because of his mention of the current superstitions. How exactly similar to the tactics of Luffkin were those of the itinerant quacks of the early nineteenth century and indeed, though they are not seen so commonly, of today!

Another example gives evidence that Halle is blessed with a pleasant sense of humor:—

"In the yere of our Lorde. 1556, there resorted unto Maydstone one Robert Haris, professynge and pretendynge an hyghe knowledge in Physike; under cloke whereof he deceived mervaylouslie with vyle Sorceries. This deceaver could tel (as the folish people reported of hym) by only lokynge in one's face, al secrete markes and scarres of the bodie, and what they had done, and what had chanced unto them all theyr lyfe tyme before. Wherewith he had so incensed the fonde and waverynge myndes of some, that pitye was to here. Amonge whome

one woman (whoe for her yeares and profession, ought to have been more discrete) when I reasoned with hir agaynste his doynges; she earnestlie affirmed, that she knewe well that he was then dystant from hir, at the leaste VII myles, and yet she verelye beleved that he knewe what she then sayde.

“Well for setting a lytell agaynste the madness of this deceaver, I hadde a dagger drawne at me not longe after.

“The wordes that I spake were to his hostess, when I saw him goe by in this wyse. Is this (quod I) the cunnygn sothsayer, that is sayde to lye at your house: Sothsayer, quod she, I knowe no suche thyng of him, therefore ye are to blame so to name him. Why quod I, suche men and suche enformed me that he can tell of thynges loste, and helpe children and cattell bewitched and forspoken, and can tell by lokynge in one’s face, what markes he hath on his bodie, and where, and tell them what they have done, and their fortune to come. Yea and all this he can doe quod she. Why then he is a Sothsayer and a Socerer quod I. Well quod she yf he have so muche cunnyng in his bellye, he is the happyer, and it is the more joy of him. Nay quod I, it were mere folyshness for hym to carye his cunnyng in his bellye: and why quod she. Why quod I, thynke you that men of lerning and knowledge cary their cunnyng in their bellies: Wher els quod she, and why not. Mary quod I, yf he should beare his cunnyng there, he should alwayes waste it when he went to the privye, and so in tyme he should lose all his cunnyng. Thys beyng merylye spoken turned me afterwards not to a little displeasure, even at their hands where I had deserved and loked for friendship as of dutie.”

Last of all, and after an exhibition of most commendable restraint, Halle closes with a little more advice to the "younge studentes" in the form of a poem of fifty-six verses. The poetry is alarmingly bad, but expresses a number of interesting ideas and practices which may be given by a selection of verses.

"Harke and drawe nere, ye younge studentes,
Your eares loke ye uncloze:
The worthye art of Chirurgery,
To practise that purpose.

"When thou arte calde at anye time,
A patient to see:
And doste perceave the cure to greate,
And ponderous for thee.

"Gette one or two of experte men,
To helpe thee in that nede:
And make them partakers wyth thee,
In that worke to procede.

"And if it happe to frame amisse,
Suspicyon can be none:
Sythe thou haste soughte all means of healtha,
And wouldste not be alone.

"But one thyng note, when two or more
Together ioygned be.
About the paynfull patient,
See that ye doe agree.

"See that no discorde doe arise,
Nor be at no debate:
For that shall sore discomfort hym,
That is in Sycke estate.

"And when alone with your sore man,
One of you is presente:
Defame nor dispraise in no wise,
The same that is absente.

"With one consent uniformlye
Comforte the wounded man:
But unto some good frende of hym,
Expresse all that ye can.

“And let them know the dannger greate,
That like is to succede:
Prognosticatinge wittilye
And in convenient spede.

“Not onlye in Chirurgery,
Thou oughtest to be experte:
But also in Astronomie,
Both prevye and aperte.

“In naturall Philosophye,
Thy studye shoulde be bente:
To know eche herbe, shrubbe, roote and tree,
Must be thy good intente.

“But chieflye the Anatomye,
Ye oughte to understande:
If ye will cure well anythinge,
That ye doe take in hande.

“For by the same above the rest,
Ye shall greate fame deserve:
The life of man from many streightes,
To save and well preserve.

“Withoute the knowledge of whyche arte,
Thou canste not chose but erre:
In all that thou shalte goe aboute,
Thy knowledge to preferre.

“As if ye cutte or cauterize,
Or use Phlebotomye:
Ye can not but erre in the same,
Withoute Anatomye.

“Endevoure therefore by all meanes
The same to knowe and cunne
For when thou haste it perfectlye
Thine arte is halflye wunne.”



